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Here is a vast aggregate of wealth; but the wars of England, even since her conversion to Christianity, have consumed many times this amount. During only twenty years from 1798, she raised, by taxes and loans, no less than \$8,353,000,000, all of which, with the exception of little more than \$100,000,000, went in one way or another for war-purposes; and, if we reckon all the *indirect* waste of property during that bloody era, we shall find the sum total spent and lost fully equal to all the estimated wealth of England at the present time!

What, then, must have been the waste of property through all Christendom during the wars consequent on the French Revolution? Those wars *cost* about \$15,000,000,000, besides two or three times as much more probably lost in other ways; two or three times the estimated property of all England wasted in little more than twenty years by nations calling themselves Christians!

SIRIS.

PETITION FOR A CONGRESS OF NATIONS.

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled:

The undersigned, President and Executive Committee of the American Peace Society, by the authority and in behalf of that Society, present the following memorial and petition:

Believing that the custom of war between Christian nations is barbarous and unnecessary, and, to quote the language of the illustrious Jefferson, "that war is an instrument entirely inefficient toward redressing wrong, and that it multiplies instead of indemnifying losses;" and being fully assured, that the time has at length come, when a more cheap, humane, equitable and Christian method of settling international contests, may be obtained, we petition your Honorable Bodies to take such means as may appear to your wisdom best adapted to this desirable end.

The plan which your petitioners would venture to suggest, as best adapted to bring about so desirable a consummation, is simple and easy to be accomplished. It consists of two distinct parts, either of which may be accomplished without the other; but their practicability and utility would be promoted by the union of both.

1. A Congress of Ambassadors representing such of the governments of Christendom as shall unite in the measure, for the purpose of digesting a code of international law, to be adopted by the universal consent of the Congress, voting by nations, and binding only on the governments that shall freely adopt it. When this work is carried as far as the circumstances of the times will permit, the Congress may be dissolved, or adjourned *sine die*, to be reassembled when circumstances favorable to a further amelioration of the condition of man may be developed.

2. An international tribunal, consisting of eminent civilians, appointed by the government of each of the concurring powers, to hold their offices during good behavior, who shall judge all cases brought before them by the mutual consent of any two or more nations, to hold their sessions in any of the countries of the high contracting parties, except in the territory of either of the parties appealing to them for judgment, who shall base their decisions on the abovementioned code of laws, so far as it is settled, and when that fails, on the principles of equity; such judgments to be enforced only by the power of public opinion, and such other peaceful means as the nations shall adopt by their ambassadors in Congress assembled.

Your petitioners are aware, that the progress of such a Congress would be slow, but the results would be the more permanent and valuable. It would begin by adopting those principles which are almost self-evident, and would advance to those which are more doubtful and complicated. Experience has shown on moral subjects, no less than in the exact sciences, that when first principles have been firmly established, the most complicated propositions may be demonstrated, and also when people once heartily begin to promote a good work, that a spirit of mutual concession is generated, which will make crooked things straight, remove mountains of difficulty, and fill up intervening valleys;—which truth our own country, both under the old confederation and the new constitution, has abundantly exemplified.

It is not long since the world was ruled altogether by the sword, but now, “opinion is the queen of the world,”* and begins to extend her legitimate sway over the nations of the earth. Her power will increase as civilization extends, and the march of civilization is commensurate with the duration of peace and the extent of peace principles. It is the gospel of peace which will “rebuke strong nations afar off,” and compel them by the power of public opinion to “beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks.”†

We live in an age when the bare attempt to do that which ought to be done, insures success. The speed, with which great enterprises are carried to their successful consummation, is no more to be measured by the creeping pace of public opinion in by-gone ages, than the velocity of a railroad car is to be judged by the slow movements of the cumbersome wains of antiquity.

If ancient attempts to preserve peace by an international tribunal, were only partially successful, that ought not to discourage us from making similar attempts on a larger scale, and in a more mature state of society, any more than the entire failure, or only partial success, of former attempts at a steam-boat, ought to have discouraged Fulton. The partial success of the Old Confederation, formed for the government of the Union in 1773, in a time of war, excitement, and inexperience in the art of self-government, did not discourage the framers of the New Constitution in 1787; but it must be confessed, that the Old Confederation was the parent of the New

* John Q. Adams's Phi Beta Kappa Address.

† Micah 4: 3.

Constitution, and had not *that* existed, *this* could never have been born. The framers of the New Constitution profited by the errors of their predecessors, and produced an institution which has astonished and delighted the world. All improvement is, in its very nature, progressive. Let the present generation form a confederation of Christian nations for desirable purposes,—the next generation will produce a constitution which, while it will leave every nation perfectly independent as to all internal affairs and forms of government, will bind all civilized nations in one bond of peace and good-will.

It is no good reason why there should be no Congress of nations, because it cannot do every thing. Nor will the refusal of one or even many nations to concur, entirely defeat our enterprise. If no other than Great Britain, France and the United States should agree on any article of international law, the principle, thus settled by the three chief commercial powers in the world, would soon become the law of nations, by the bare power and impulse of moral truth. For instance, should these three powers repudiate the practice of privateering, the relinquishment of that practice would forthwith be a blessing to the high contracting parties, and this relic of barbarism would soon be relinquished by every Christian nation.

As the contemplated Congress would have nothing to do, and *could* have nothing to do, with the internal affairs of nations, it could be no more dangerous to our free institutions than a treaty of peace and commerce, entered into by us with the ambassador of a monarchical government. Even a general treaty of peace, entered into by all the powers of Christendom, especially if we should not be bound by any article of such a treaty, unless we should voluntarily and formally assent to it, could not endanger our free institutions. Despotism would be more endangered by a Congress of nations, than our republican principles. It was well observed in the Report of the Committee of Foreign Relations on this subject, presented to Congress at its last session, "War has ever been the fruitful source of arbitrary power. They are, to a certain degree, inseparable." By preventing war, then, we promote free institutions in other countries, and secure them in our own.

If a good thing be liable to abuse, we should not deem that a sufficient argument against its adoption; otherwise we must throw away all the improvements of society, both physical and moral. The constantly advancing improvements in the world are a sure guaranty, that when a thing is good in itself, the good will gain an increasing preponderance, which will finally reduce the evil to the "small dust of the balance." If bodies armed with physical force are dangerous, it does not follow that similar bodies, armed only with moral power, will be dangerous also. Bodies so constituted that there is "no appeal from them but to the sword,"* may be dangerous, while those that have no appeal but to public opinion may be, at least, harmless. If the fact, that civil war is more bitter than foreign, and that the "battles are more sanguinary, and victory less merciful,"* which grow out of the organization of society, be of

* Mr. Legare's report on this subject to the last session of Congress.

sufficient weight to discourage such organizations, then society must revert to its first elements, and all government but that of brute force be superseded. Mankind have so long been used to consider the sword as the only legitimate sceptre, by which the world should or could be governed, they forget that there is any power in enlightened public opinion.

"A reference to a third power of all such controversies as could be safely confided to any tribunal unknown to the constitution of our country," has been already recommended by the Committee on Foreign Relations. The executive of the country has already shown its concurrence by frequently submitting disputes between the United States and other nations to the crowned heads of Europe. This course has received the decided approbation of our own country, and elicited the admiration of the whole Christian and civilized world. The only questions, then, which remain, are these:

1. Whether this course should continue to be an occasional measure, or become a systematic and general rule?

2. Whether the judges, or umpires, in these cases are to act by the immediate impression of truth or error on their minds, or be governed in their decisions by known and acknowledged principles and laws, recognised and adopted by the parties in controversy?

3. Whether we should continue to leave our disputes to the monarchs of Europe, singly and individually, or to a body of jurists, selected from the different states composing the proposed confederation, already distinguished for their legal talents and integrity.

On these three topics, your petitioners would briefly remark:

1. Though an occasional reference to a third power is good, a settled and regulated practice is far better, and much more likely to result in the peace and happiness of mankind. Were there a regular and acknowledged tribunal, always ready to judge the cases brought before it, governments would be compelled, by their own constituents, and by the opinion of the world, to resort to it, rather than to the expensive, barbarous, and uncertain decision of the sword. If the antagonist party should refuse to comply, he would find but little sympathy for the disasters which might befall him in the course of the war, and be glad to make peace by the intervention of such a tribunal.

2. Such is the infirmity of human nature, such its liability to be influenced by selfish motives, that every possible guard should be provided against errors of judgment arising from such causes. Now, a code of international laws, settled upon abstract principles, before the occurrence of any case to warp the judgment of the framers of such laws, adopted by the compact and agreement of the nations generally, especially, if the contending nations should happen to be parties to the compact, would add greatly to the probability of a just decision by the proposed court of nations.

3. It appears almost an anomaly that the United States, "the only republic in the world,"* should continue to leave its disputes with other powers to monarchs, who are busy with their own affairs, and who may have difficulties of their own to be settled by the

* Mr. Legare's Report.

mediation of our opponent. Such was the fact in the case of our North East Boundary question. Ought we not to prefer a tribunal composed of men, free from the cares of state, the intrigues of courts, and controversies of their own with other nations; men with an established reputation, knowing that the peaceful execution of their sentence depends not only on the correctness of their judgment, but on their power to make it appear just to the world; that on their ability to make and vindicate a correct decision, depends their present and future reputation? The governor of the State of Maine told one of your petitioners, that he is morally certain, that if the North East Boundary question had been left to such a tribunal as we contemplate, the case would long ago have been settled to the entire satisfaction of this country.

If "judges do more than pronounce and enforce judgment in particular cases," if "those opinions are the basis of all government and legislation," as is conceded by the author of the very able report already alluded to, how very superior must be a bench of able jurists, of acknowledged talents and integrity, to individual umpires, chosen rather for their station than their talents, and liable to have their judgment warped by a thousand extraneous circumstances.

Recent events afford a good opportunity of showing the excellency of the plan proposed by your petitioners. France claims from Mexico an indemnity of about \$700,000. Mexico denies the justice of the claim, and refuses to pay. France blockades her ports, and shuts out all other nations from their accustomed commerce. England complains of the blockade as an infringement on her rights, and argues that France has no right thus to injure Mexico, and, through her, all other commercial powers, until she has inflicted a still greater injury on Mexico, by seizing her commerce, and declaring war. Then, it is contended, France would have a right to capture neutral vessels trading to Mexican ports. Now, were there a court of nations, France and Mexico would have submitted the case to it, rather than experience so great inconvenience for so small a sum; and had there been a code of international laws, the right of France to blockade, or of neutral nations to trade to, the ports of Mexico, would have been clearly defined. For want of these, war may commence between France and Mexico, and extend to Great Britain and all the commercial world.

The General Court of Massachusetts, one of the most numerous and enlightened legislative bodies in the world, has had this subject under consideration for five years past. At first the plan was treated as the phantasy of a benevolent enthusiast. Discussion threw light upon it. Resolves recommending a Congress of nations to the attention of our National Executive, and "to the legislatures of the several States inviting their expression of sentiment and coöperation in favor of the end in view," passed the Senate of that State in the year 1837, by a majority of nearly six to one. Last year, similar resolves passed both branches of the Legislature of that State, with only two dissenting voices. The American Peace Society waited for that joyful consummation, ere they ventured to bring this subject before the collected wisdom of the nation. But the New York Peace Society has anticipated us, and the subject has received from your Honorable Bodies, a more kind and respectful attention, than

they had expected on its first presentation. When the Congress of the Union shall have given the subject as continued and mature deliberation as the General Court of Massachusetts, probably the same results will follow.

Were our contemplated plan to involve great expense, we might perhaps pause before we presented it to the consideration of Congress; but the share of expense falling on this country, would not maintain a single gun-boat. One ship of the line would cost more than a Congress and Court of nations for the whole civilized world. We should soon be a thousand times repaid by the money saved in the preparation for war; and our agriculturists, merchants, manufacturers and fishermen, would reap golden harvests from the increasing wealth of their customers.

If this enterprise would endanger our free institutions, we ought to pause and reflect before we run the hazard even for so great a good; but we are persuaded, that the long-continued peace, which must be the consequence of the establishment of an international tribunal, would not only save our republic from its greatest danger, but, under God, it would be the means of extending the principles of Christianity and freedom all over the world.

The bare attempt, even if it failed, would be glorious. It would show to the world our desire for the peace and happiness of mankind. But the attempt would not fail, if it were persevered in, so as to be distinctly seen and understood by the people of Europe. If only France and Great Britain joined us at first, success would be certain. The work has already begun in England. France will follow. God has destined this country to take the lead in this great enterprise. Let us not be unmindful of our high destiny.

From the abovementioned considerations, and many more which could be urged, your petitioners humbly pray, that your Honorable Bodies would take such action in the premises, as, after mature deliberation, shall appear best adapted to the end proposed.

WILLIAM LADD,

J. P. BLANCHARD,
H. WARE, JR.,
AMASA WALKER,
GEO. C. BECKWITH,
L. T. STODDARD,

JOHN OWEN,
JAMES K. WHIPPLE,
EDWARD NOYES,
HOWARD MALCOM.

INTELLIGENCE.

PEACE MEETING IN NEW YORK.

A meeting of the New York Peace Society was held in the Chatham Street Chapel, on Wednesday evening, Nov. 28th, Dr. JAMES O. POND, the President, in the chair. A very respectable audience was present, and evinced much interest in the exercises.